

Missouri Veterans Commission



**Annual Report
Fiscal Year
July 1, 2003 - June 30, 2004**

**State of Missouri
Department of Public Safety**

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Emmett W. Fairfax, Chairman

Carson Ross, Vice Chairman

Carl H. Niewoehner , Member

Bernadette A. Miller, Member

Arvid E. West, Jr., Member

Bob Holden
Governor



Ronald L. Taylor
Executive Director

MISSOURI VETERANS COMMISSION

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FY 2004 saw both the conclusion of plans made in the previous decade and new beginnings required by recent changes in the world situation. The Commission dedicated a new 100-bed special care unit at the St. Louis Veterans Home in early 2004 and began admitting residents to the new 200-bed Veterans Home at Mt. Vernon in June. This was the culmination of plans to expand the number of Veterans homes beds to 1,350 statewide. The Commission also dedicated two new Veterans Cemeteries at Bloomfield and Jacksonville which represents the culmination of the four cemetery system envisioned in 1996.

While the Commission continued its efforts to reach all 562,000 of Missouri's veterans with information and assistance on Veterans benefits it also became involved in new outreach efforts to assist the thousands of National Guard members and Reservists who were activated to serve following September 11, 2001. The severe disruption this has created for them and their families as well as their requirements for information and assistance when they return to Missouri has created a new challenge for the Veterans Commission and its staff.

I am confident that the caring and committed staff of the Commission, with the support of both the legislature and executive branch, will continue to meet both this new challenge as well as continuing the provision of high quality services at our seven Veterans Homes, our four Veterans Cemeteries, and through our Service to Veterans Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald L. Taylor".

"To honor and serve the veterans whose dedication and sacrifice have preserved our nation and its freedoms."

CONTACT US

State Veterans Home

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Director, Service to Veterans

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Supervisor, Northwest Region

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Supervisor, Northeast Region

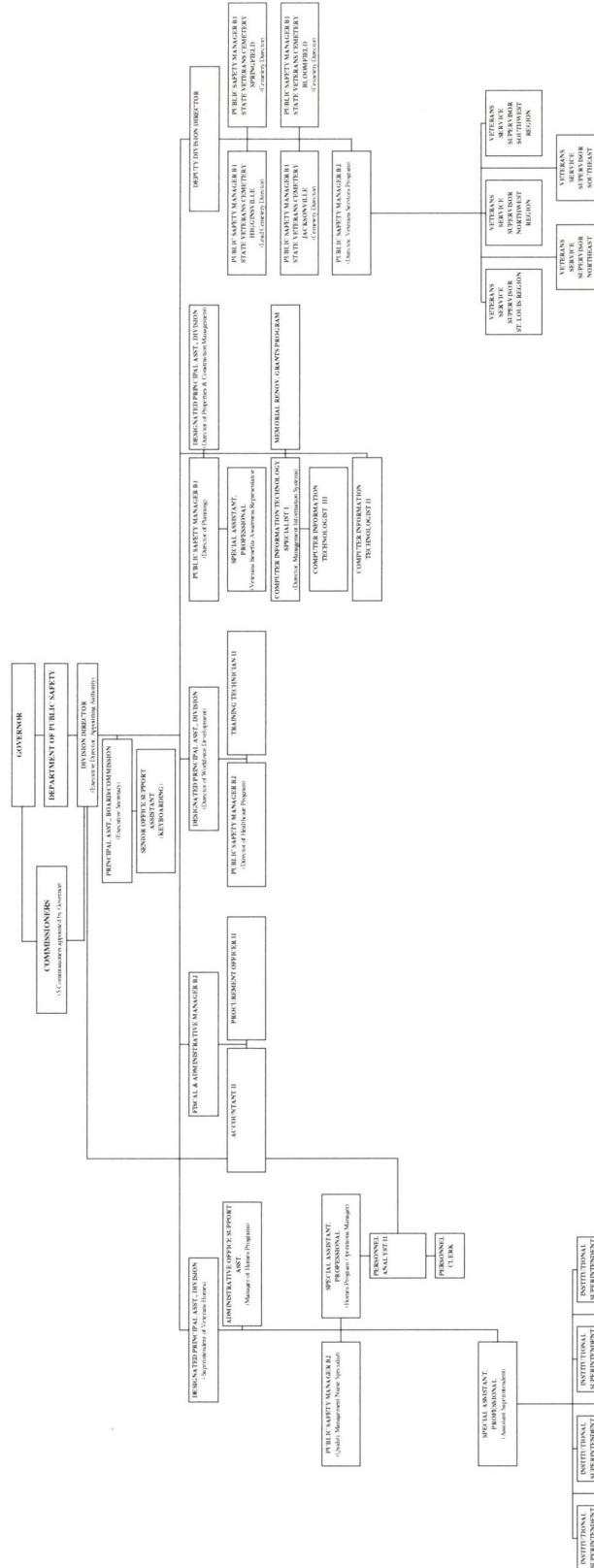
1500 Vandiver Drive
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Columbia, MO 65202
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Missouri State Veterans Cemeteries

In 1996, the Commission was authorized to implement a state veterans cemetery program. In January of 2000, interments began at Springfield and Higginsville. Two additional veterans cemeteries, Bloomfield and Jacksonville began interments in the fall of 2003. Planning is underway for a fifth veterans cemetery to be constructed adjacent to Fort Leonard Wood.



“Provide interment services for veterans and their eligible family members in a dignified, efficient, and compassionate manner.”

The cemetery program is a reflection and continuing reminder of our gratitude and respect for the service and sacrifices of Missouri veterans.

The VISION and GOAL of the Missouri Veterans Cemetery System is to locate cemeteries strategically throughout the state, making it possible for veterans and their families to have access within a 75-mile radius of their homes.

The existing cemeteries vary in size from 55 to 117 acres. The estimated capacity for the four cemeteries is in excess of 120,000 graves. The establishment of a veterans cemetery at Fort

Leonard Wood will provide approximately 100,000 additional graves, ensuring our ability to serve Missouri veterans for many decades.



Each state veterans cemetery consists of a committal shelter where interment services are conducted, an administration and maintenance area, and a columbarium wall for the placement of cremation urns. Facilities and grounds are maintained in accordance with standards established by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

There is no charge for any of the services provided at the state veterans cemeteries. Benefits include:



- Burial space
- Grave liner
- Upright granite marker
- Opening and closing of the grave
- Perpetual Care
- Military honors

Veterans, active duty military, and their dependents are eligible for burial in a Missouri State Veterans Cemetery.

An eligible veteran must have been discharged or separated from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable and have completed the required period of service as established by federal law.

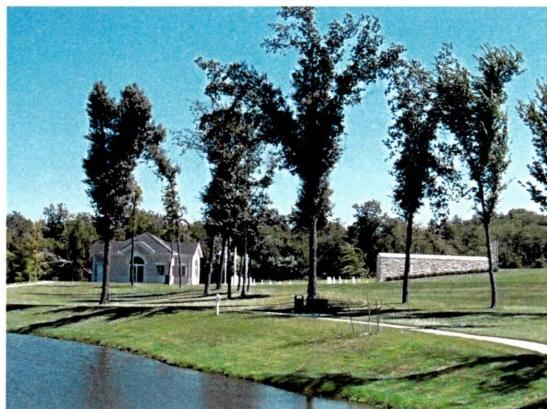
The veteran must have resided in Missouri for a minimum of 180 days at some period in his or her life.

Persons entitled to retired pay as a result of 20 years creditable service with the Reserves or National Guard are eligible for burial in a Missouri State Veterans Cemetery. A U.S. citizen who served in the armed forces of a government allied with the United States may also be eligible for burial in a Missouri State Veterans Cemetery. Note: Any veteran convicted of federal or state capital crime is not eligible for burial in a VA National Cemetery or a Missouri State Veterans Cemetery.





The Springfield cemetery is easily accessible from Highway 65, south of the city of Springfield and is located on 60 acres donated by the city of Springfield adjacent to the James River in Greene County. The cemetery conducted its first interment on January 21, 2000. As of June 30, 2004, 1,575 interments had been completed.



The Higginsville cemetery is located on Business Highway 13 in Higginsville in Lafayette County. The cemetery is situated on 55 acres next to the Confederate Memorial State Park and has completed 524 interments as of June 30, 2004.



The Bloomfield cemetery is located on 65 acres donated by Stoddard County, next to the Stars and Stripes Museum on State Highway 25 immediately south of Bloomfield. The cemetery was dedicated on October 10, 2003 and has completed 111 interments as of June 30, 2004.

The Jacksonville cemetery, in Randolph County, is on County Road 1675, immediately to the west of State Highway 63. The cemetery was built on 117 gently rolling acres donated by Associated Electric. Dedication of the cemetery was on November 3, 2003. 37 interments have been completed as of June 30, 2004.



Missouri State Veterans Homes

During Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 Missouri's seven State Veterans Homes sought to accomplish the Missouri Veterans Commission mission, "To honor and serve the Veterans whose dedication and sacrifice have preserved our nation and its freedoms" by:

- Maintaining the high quality care standards which have become its trademark.
- Accomplishing growth in total number of Veterans served, bed capacity and several other key areas.

The pictures accompanying these pages tell part of these stories from the past year. In addition to these pictures are the facts behind them. During FY 2004 the Homes Program cared for 1413 special Americans, our country's Veterans. This total is a new record and accounted for a 92% overall occupancy rate. For the approximately 1300 employees – the Program's most valued resource – the story includes daily dedication by these great employees as they care for our State's Veterans – America's Heroes - living in Missouri.

"Through inspired employees, the Missouri Veterans Homes daily enrich the lives of the veterans we care for through the provision of quality healthcare in a state-of-the art facility."



The Homes Program, through its valued employees, maintained its reputation for providing high quality skilled nursing care to America's Heroes in the following areas:

- Resident and Family Member Annual Satisfaction Surveys exceeded 90% satisfaction ratings. These surveys are designed to measure overall resident and family member satisfaction with nursing care, dietary, environmental and related services. For another year the surveys validated that overall, our Veterans and their family members trust and are satisfied with the employees and resources of each State Veterans Home more than any other care setting option.
- Clinical care outcomes in several critical care areas continued to surpass national standards. These key areas include: Pressure Ulcers, Unplanned Weight Loss, Physical Restraint Use.
- The Homes Program successfully held its 4th Annual Certified Nursing Assistant (C.N.A.) Day in Jefferson City. This program recognizes the very best of the Homes' Certified Nursing Assistants with a day of leadership training, awards and team building fun.
- Employee of the Month & Year and Quality Management Recognition Awards were provided to deserving staff across all departments at each State Veterans Homes throughout the year. These awards programs are conducted to allow for timely peer and management team recognition of exceptional performance by Homes Program employees.

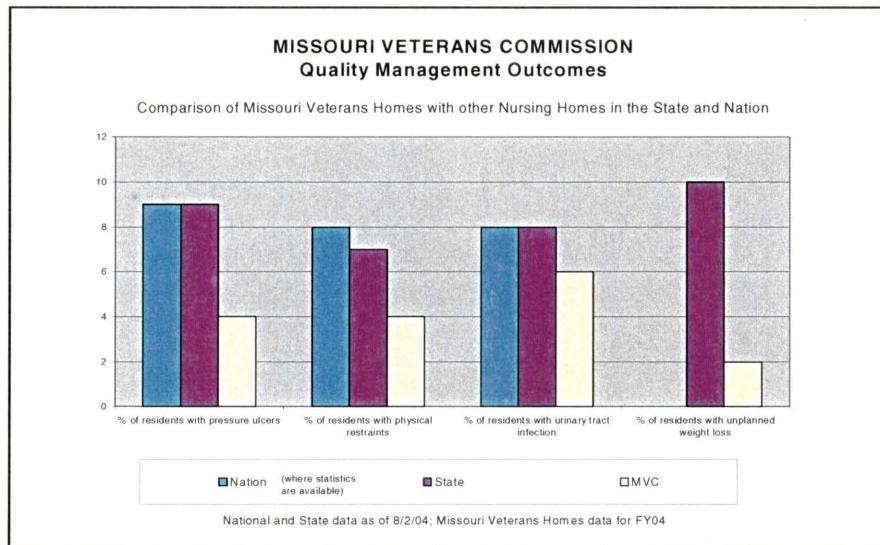


While repeating the exceptional veteran resident satisfaction, care and employee recognition outcomes, the Homes Program achieved the following program growth milestones during the year:



- Two Homes, the Missouri Veterans Homes at St. Louis and Mt. Vernon, took occupancy of major construction expansion projects. Opening ceremonies were held at both Homes with Governor Bob Holden providing keynote remarks and marked the end to multiple year construction projects for each. A requirement for taking occupancy required both Homes to complete regulatory occupancy surveys with a 100% regulatory standards “met” rating by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The St. Louis survey occurred in February 2004 and allowed the Home to take occupancy of its 100 bed Dementia Center of Excellence addition, bringing total facility capacity to 300 beds. The Mt. Vernon survey was completed in May 2004 and granted the Home its much anticipated approval to move into a new, state of the art 200 bed facility. This was an increase over its current leased space 100 bed operation. These final expansion projects bring total Veterans Home capacity to 1350 beds.
- The seven State Veterans Homes benefited from record levels of community involvement. Each Home partners with local Veterans Service Organizations, civic groups and private citizens through its Volunteer Services department and Veterans Assistance Leagues. In FY 2004, these partnerships amassed over 126,756 volunteerism hours – an increase of 8% or 6,000 hours over the previous year. Likewise, cash donations including fund raising proceeds, used to provide capital items and programming supplies, totaled \$698,460.00. This was a 25% increase, or \$146,307.00 from FY 2003 donated funds. The seven State Homes also provide monthly and annual Volunteer recognition activities to ensure that these very special members of each Homes’ civic community are recognized for their selfless donations of time and material resources to our Veterans.

For the coming year, Fiscal Year 2005, the Homes Program will continue to maintain its reputation for high quality nursing care to America's Heroes. While accomplishing this goal, the Homes Program will also aggressively pursue efficient operating practices and the resources necessary to reach 97% capacity for its total 1,350 operating beds.



Service to Veterans

We will honor those we serve by proudly treating everyone with the respect, compassion and dignity they earned through service to their country.

We will hold ourselves to the highest professional standards by maintaining and sharing our expertise in all veterans benefits.

We will aggressively pursue every opportunity to obtain benefits that will enrich the lives of our veterans and their families.

We will each take a leadership role within the commission and our communities to promote a more unified, coordinated approach to all services provided by the Missouri Veterans Commission.

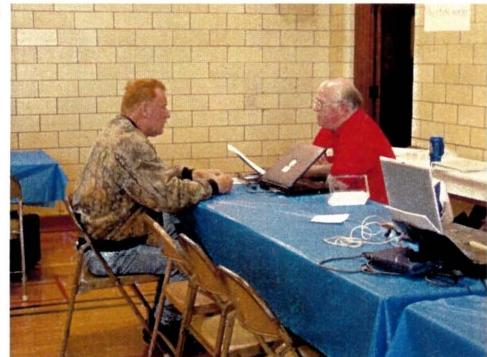


“Provide services and benefits assistance to veterans and their families in a timely and compassionate manner.”



Through the Service to Veterans Program, the Veterans Service Officers and Assistants provide counseling and assistance to thousands of veterans and their dependents throughout the state. Not only do these trained professionals counsel veterans on what VA and State Veterans Benefits are available, but also complete and submit claims applications with all necessary documentation.

Veterans benefits for which assistance is provided include, but are not limited to, application for Compensation; War-time Pension; Education and Training; Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment; VA Health Care eligibility; Home Loan Guaranty; Life Insurance; Burial Benefits; and Survivor Benefits (Dependency and Indemnity Compensation and Death Pension); Education and Home Loan Guarantees and any other VA benefits and/or those offered by the State. Assistance is also provided in locating proof of service: military medical and service records; birth and death certificates; and other documentation needed to file claims for veteran benefits.



The Service Officers are also available for any follow-up work necessary with the Department of Veterans Affairs to obtain the maximum amount of benefits due any eligible veteran and/or dependent. Veterans Service Officers and Assistants are thoroughly trained and knowledgeable in all areas of veterans benefits.

Veterans Service Offices are located in almost every county to make services available to veterans close to their homes. Veterans Service Officers and Assistants are also available to groups interested in veterans' benefits. These qualified personnel may give presentations and instruction regarding the benefits for which veterans may be eligible as a result of military service in the U. S. Armed Forces.

The Commission has twenty-seven Service to Veterans home offices located in Cameron, Cape Girardeau, Carthage, Columbia, Farmington, Ft Leonard Wood, Hannibal, Jefferson City, Joplin, Kansas City, Kennett, Kirksville, Lebanon, Maryville, Mexico, Mt Vernon, Overland, Poplar Bluff, St Charles, St James, St Joseph, St Louis, Sedalia, Sikeston, Springfield, Warrensburg and West Plains. There are also ninety-eight Satellite Offices located throughout the State.

The Service to Veterans Program is operated by a Director, five Veteran Service Supervisors, thirty-one Veteran Service Officers/Veterans Service Assistants and ten clerical staff.

During Fiscal Year 2004, the service officers and assistants in the Service to Veterans Program participated in twelve Veterans Benefits Supermarkets that were held around the state. They provided information on benefits and assistance with claims for over 4400 veterans who attended these supermarkets. They also answered inquiries generated by the toll free line, manned booths at various county and regional fairs as well as the Missouri State Fair, and made presentations on veterans benefits at numerous locations around the state, in addition to their regular duties. The service officers prepared 19,430 veterans forms and added 4,971 new clients to the veterans database in FY 2004.



The Service to Veterans Program participates in the Employee of the Month Program by recognizing employees for outstanding service and awarding certificates to Employees of the Quarter and Employee of the Year.

Helen Kneir – Third Quarter 2003

Bob Blum - Fourth Quarter 2003

Ray AuBuchon - First Quarter 2004

Dennis Nolte & Karen Etzler - Second Quarter 2004

Helen Kneir – Honorable Mention Employee of the Year 2003

Shirley Ryker – Honorable Mention Employee of the Year 2003

Bob Blum – Employee of the Year 2003



Veterans Benefits Awareness Task Force



In November 2001, Lt. Governor Joe Maxwell headed an organized group of citizens in developing a statewide campaign whose sole purpose is to identify and enroll some 30,000 eligible Missouri Veterans for those Veterans Affairs benefits that they might have earned.



August 2002, Governor Bob Holden announced the statewide kickoff of the Veterans Benefits Awareness Task Force. The task forces goal was to assist veterans in submitting over 4,000 claims over the next year. By FY04 the plan was to increase the Veterans Affairs compensation and pension benefits paid by \$40 million over the fiscal year 2002 amount.



January 2004, The Veterans Benefits Awareness Task Force has been a great success over its first full year with over 2,000 additional veterans in Missouri receiving VA benefits and with an increase from \$495 million to \$549 million in benefits paid.

Veterans Benefits Supermarkets

This program informs veterans of available benefits and creates a process where veterans can apply for benefits on-site. Veterans can access Job Search Assistance, Small Business Information, Education Opportunities, Health Screenings and Veterans Benefits Assistance. The first supermarket was held on July 20, 2002 in Florissant, Missouri. Since June 30, 2004 twenty Supermarkets have been held serving over 6,000 veterans and their dependents. An estimated additional 30 to 100 veterans attended each event, but did not register.



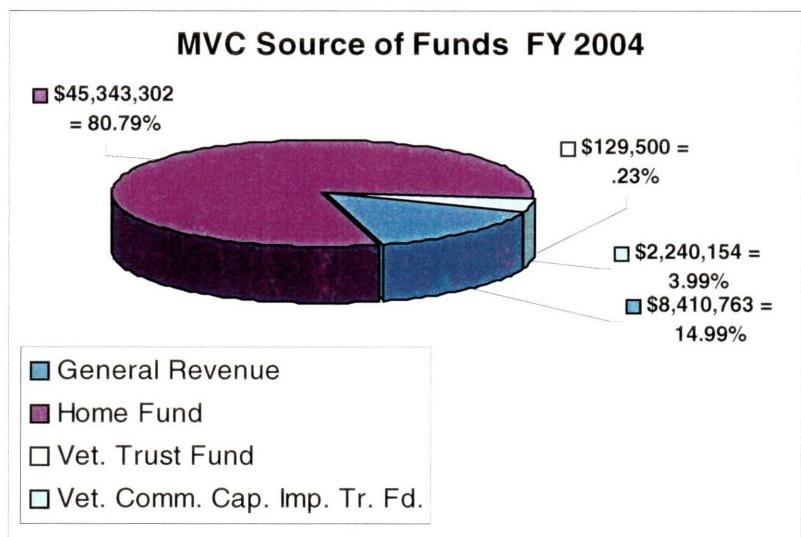
August 2, 2002 Governor Bob Holden announced the new veterans hotline number 1-866-VETINFO. A new statewide toll-free number to improve veterans' access to their benefits. The service is an inbound telephone system made to a staffed call center, with the gathered information compiled into a database or spreadsheets, then distributed to multiple Missouri Veterans Commission staff. This toll free number has received over 6,400 calls assisting veterans.

Veterans Trust Fund

Veterans Trust Fund Statement of Receipts and Disbursements Fiscal Year 2004

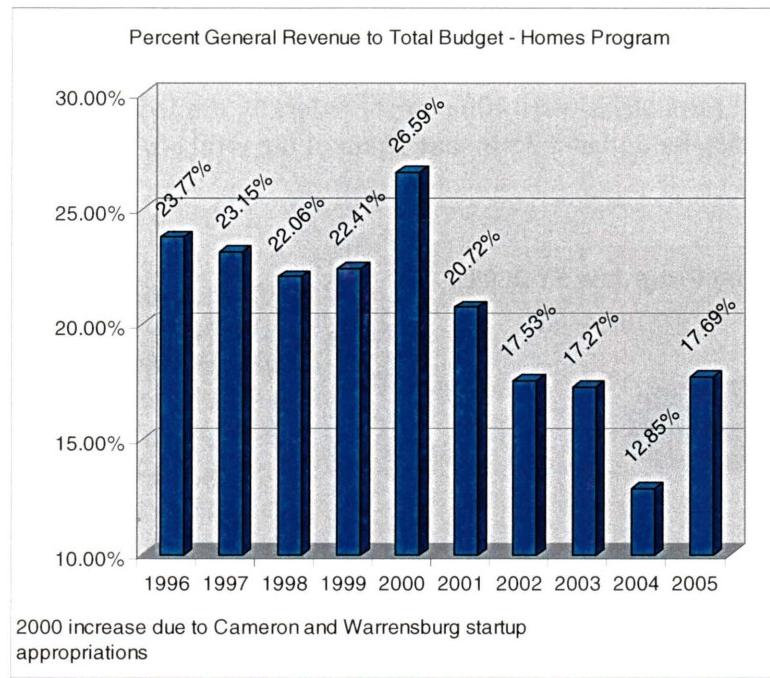
Beginning Balance	\$408,806
Receipts	
Tax Check-Off	\$86,714
Direct Donations	\$6,005
Interest Income	\$6,810
Total Receipts	\$99,529
Disbursements	
Personal Services	\$51,840
Travel	\$7,797
Printing, Advertising & Publications	\$964
Veterans Benefits Awareness Program	\$4,539
Promotional Supplies	\$2,679
Transfers	\$33,809
Total Disbursements	\$101,628
Ending Balance	\$406,707

Budget/Funding Sources



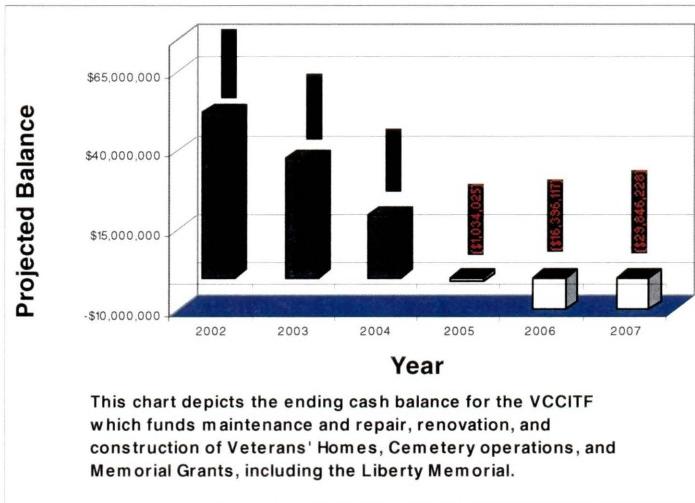
General Revenue (GR)

General Revenue is split between the Homes Program, Service to Veterans Program and Central Office operations. The majority of GR (77%) is used to fund the operation of the seven Veterans Homes. The remaining 23% is allocated to the Service to Veterans Program and Central Office operations. The Home's percentage makes up approximately 13% of the homes total budget and the remaining 87% comes from the Home Fund and other sources.



Home Fund (HF)

The Home Fund is the primary source of revenue for the Missouri Veterans Homes. This fund is a combination of monies received from the residents living in the home and reimbursements from the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. This approximates 87 percent of the home's operating budget.

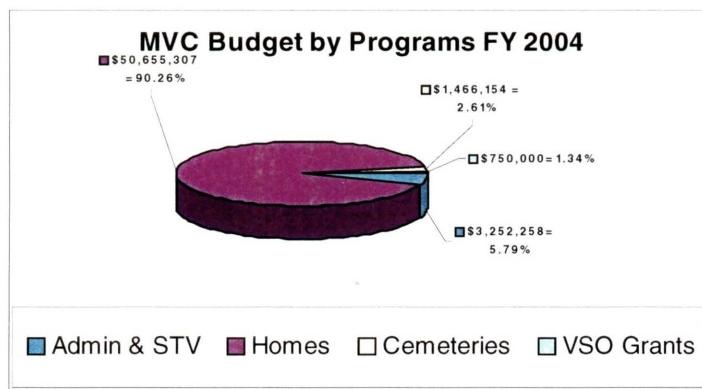


Veterans Commission Capital Improvements Trust Fund (VCCITF)

The VCCITF receives transfers from the Gaming Commission Fund for the operation of our four cemeteries, and the maintenance, repair, renovation and construction projects at our seven veterans homes.

Federal Funds (FED)

Federal grants from the federal Department of Veterans Affairs supplement the construction of our homes and cemeteries. These funds are based on a percentage of total project costs. For example, the last two cemeteries were 100 percent federally funded projects. The homes projects are funded at a 65% federal and 35% state share of the total construction cost.



Veterans Trust Fund (VTF)

The Veterans Trust Fund is a charitable fund that receives donations from businesses, individuals or through the income tax form check-off box. These funds can be used across the Commission.



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